

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 172

By Harper

A RESOLUTION to honor and recognize the fifty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the Cameron High School Mighty Panthers men's varsity basketball team.

WHEREAS, the General Assembly is pleased to specially honor and commend those successful high school athletic programs that, through their magnificent exploits, bring honor to Tennessee and serve as exceptional ambassadors of this State; and

WHEREAS, the Cameron High School men's basketball program is one such estimable program; over the course of its seventeen seasons, the Cameron High School Mighty Panthers established a record of excellence that continues to stand as an example of the very best in Tennessee high school athletics; and

WHEREAS, the Mighty Panthers won more than twenty-one team championships, and they set a Nashville city record of fifty-five consecutive victories, a record that still stands today; and

WHEREAS, beginning with its inaugural season in 1954, the Mighty Panthers program consistently included a fine coaching staff; under Coaches Claxton Starnes, Eugene Stevenson, and Ben Jobe, Cameron High School teams garnered a number of city- and statewide honors in the program's first ten years; and

WHEREAS, Coach Jobe, who played at Fisk University, later became a successful college coach and mentor, having taken many of the lessons he had learned at Cameron with him; and

WHEREAS, in the mid-1960s, Cameron High School's basketball players, along with athletes from other African-American high schools across Tennessee, were allowed to participate in the TSSAA; and

WHEREAS, after this historic development, the Mighty Panthers continued to dominate their competitors, winning several district, regional, sub-state, and invitational tournaments; and

WHEREAS, in 1964, Ronald Lawson, Sr., was named Head Coach; during his tenure, his staff included several outstanding Assistant Coaches, among them James Stevenson and Eugene Speight; and

WHEREAS, after moving on from Cameron, Coach Speight served on McGavock's 1976 TSSAA AAA men's varsity state championship team, while James Stevenson coached the Pearl Lady Tigers to the 1980 TSSAA championship; and

WHEREAS, the Cameron High School Mighty Panthers finished the 1970 season with a 29-1 record, their first TSSAA state title, and a number of other honors: Nashville Interscholastic League (NIL) champions as well as seventeenth district, sub-state, regional, and state titles; and

WHEREAS, that same year, Mighty Panther Harold Corlew was named to the All-NIL team; Mr. Corlew and teammate Freddie Lewis were selected for the All-State Tournament team; and David Vaughn, Jr., was named TSSAA Tournament Most Valuable Player; and

WHEREAS, the following year, Cameron High's men's basketball team enjoyed a 32-0 record and won the TSSAA state title yet again; the 1971 team ranked in the top five prep teams nationwide; and

WHEREAS, team standouts that year included Co-captain Cecil Beaird, who was voted All-Metro, All-Region, and All-State; Geary Jackman was chosen All-Metro; Ken Cooper was selected as All-Metro, All-District, All-Region, All-State Tournament, and named District Tournament MVP; and Michael Edmondsdon was voted All-Metro, All-State, and All-Region Tournament; and

WHEREAS, David Vaughn, Jr., enjoyed an even better season than he did in 1970; he was again named State Tournament MVP; and also honored as NIL MVP; additionally, Mr. Vaughn was chosen All-District, All-Region, All-State, and named a prep All-American; and

WHEREAS, David Vaughn, Jr., is tied fifth for the Individual Single Game with forty-five points and tied for number one for Most Field Goals Made with nineteen points; he achieved both of these distinctions during tournament play in 1971; and

WHEREAS, Cecil Beaird, Michael Edmondson, Ken Cooper, and Freddie Lewis have all received nominations to the Metro Nashville Sports Hall of Fame, while Mr. Vaughn is an inductee; six Mighty Panthers from the 1971 team received college scholarship offers; and

WHEREAS, Coach Ronald Lawson, Sr., was named the 1971 Coach of the Year, and he has since been inducted into the TSSAA, Metro Nashville Public Schools, and Tennessee Sports Halls of Fame; the gymnasium at Cameron Middle School is named the Ronald Lawson Sr., Gym of Champions in his honor; and

WHEREAS, throughout the program's history, a number of players received scholarship offers; Fisk University extended offers to Gary Jackman, Sam McDonald, Michael Edmondson, George House, Thomas Miller, Ronnie Johnson, Willie Westmoreland, Cecil Beaird, Freddie Lewis, and Donald Tolliver; and

WHEREAS, players David Vaughn, Jr., Ken Cooper, and Richard Burnett received scholarship offers from Oral Roberts University; Talladega College offered scholarships to Bernard Campbell, Jr., Tyree Vaughn, and Adolphe Jones, Jr.; and

WHEREAS, other Mighty Panthers who received offers include Robert Beason, Ronald Myles, Richard Brooks, Robert Green, Carl Baker, Stan Johnson, Ken Riley, and Charles McKissack, to name a few; and

WHEREAS, although the Cameron High School men's basketball program has been defunct now for nearly forty years, its history continues to inspire high school athletes today; Mighty Panthers players and coaches exemplify the very best qualities to be found in Tennessee high school athletic programs; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED SIXTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we hereby honor and recognize the fifty-fifth anniversary of the founding of Cameron High School's men's basketball program and express our sincerest hope that its remarkable history of excellence and perseverance will continue to inspire young athletes for many years to come.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.